



Graduate students' identified learning outcomes achieved by a community health initiative course sequence

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Summary

This poster presents results from five years of student identified learning outcomes related to the Community Health Initiative's five-course sequence. Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) students affirmed they are linking their community service-learning experiences to their professional social responsibility roles in society.

Each Community Health Initiative course has a service-learning component that builds in complexity, beginning with students' involvement in established community projects chosen by the DPT program.

Beginning in the second course, students have opportunities to choose a community organization in which they are interested. The sequence culminates in a capstone project, requiring a minimum of 60 hours in which students collaborate with a community agency to meet an identified need or goal of that organization. Students are expected to demonstrate their roles as educators, consultants, and/or advocates through the course sequence.

A retrospective longitudinal case series design was used for this study, focusing on student identified educational outcomes from the five-course sequence. Eighty-three percent of students identified outcomes that occurred in seven categories required by national accreditation standards for physical therapy. Recognized evaluative criteria in order of percent of total frequencies were: *Social Responsibility and Advocacy* – 19.6%; *Prevention, Health Promotion, Fitness and Wellness* – 16.9%; *Education* – 11.37%; *Compassion and Caring* – 10.7%; *Accountability* – 9.2%; *Cultural Competence* – 8.7%; and *Communication* – 6.52%.

In this study investigating how service-learning benefits students' professional development and education, faculty members most frequently recognized the learning outcome "understanding individual differences." Although the pedagogy of serving-learning is acknowledged, it is still not deeply embedded within the majority of physical therapy curricula. The information from this study is important for educators who adamantly embrace service-learning and those who are looking for more evidence of effectiveness before incorporating it more fully into their curricula.

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